

canine arthritis management

THE HOME ASSESSMENT CHECKLIST

info@caninearthritis.co.uk

www.caninearthritis.co.uk/how-cam-can-help/tools/home-assessment-tool

#itsmyhometoo

canine arthritis management

INSTRUCTIONS: **Please tick either YES or NO as applicable.**

For further information, please refer to our website:
www.caninearthritis.co.uk/how-cam-can-help/tools/home-assessment-tool

Q1. Are floor surfaces to which the dog has access inside the home non-slip?

Slippery floor surfaces include tiles, wood, and laminate in areas where the dog has regular access. Consideration must be given if some floor surfaces may be wet on a regular basis.

☐ **YES** ☐ **NO - ACTION REQUIRED**

CONSIDER

- Placement of rugs along routes used by the dog
- Mats placed at doorways, thresholds and adjacent to their bed
- Limit access to problem areas if possible
- Use well fitting dog 'boots' or anti-slip coatings
- Keep foot fur trimmed and nails short

Q2. Can the dog easily go up and down stairs/steps to which they have access, inside and outside the house?

Steps include sets of steps, or single steps, both in and outside of the home. They may be too high, too narrow, too steep, slippery or too many. 'Easily' means without hesitation, loss of balance, pausing or increased effort or speed.

☐ **YES** ☐ **NO - ACTION REQUIRED**

CONSIDER

- Use of a stair gate to restrict access to stairs
- Ramps may be suitable for some steps
- Carrying the dog up and down if safe to do so
- Carpeting bare steps or using anti-slip tape
- Use of a suitable harness/sling to assist the dog with balance and control

Q3. Are all thresholds easy to step over?

Thresholds are entrances and exits to the property and between rooms. They may be combined with steps. 'Easy' means without hesitation, loss of balance, pausing or increased effort or speed.

☐ **YES** ☐ **NO - ACTION REQUIRED**

CONSIDER

- Use of a threshold ramp
- Reducing the height of the step
- Using rubber mats either side of the threshold
- Using an alternative door

Q4. Are walkways clear of clutter and free from tight turns?

Cluttered walkways and tight turns require the dog to alter their posture to negotiate around them. This can unbalance them leading to slips, trips or falls. Walkways tend to lead to exits and entrances, which may be an area where excitable behaviour is exhibited, and thus an increased opportunity to lose balance and trip, slip or fall.

☐ **YES** ☐ **NO - ACTION REQUIRED**

CONSIDER

- Use of a threshold ramp
- Clearing passageways to provide a straight path for the dog to move along
- Observe your dog moving and ensure that it has a wide enough turning circle
- Provide non-slip mats at strategic exits, entrances and doorway

Q5. Can your dog get in and out of their padded dog bed easily, without help?

Can the dog negotiate the edge of their bed with ease? Does the dog find a comfortable position quickly? Does the dog slip on the floor as it climbs in or out?

☐ **YES** ☐ **NO - ACTION REQUIRED**

CONSIDER

- Positioning. Ensure the dog has room to manoeuvre when getting in and out of the bed
- Using a larger bed to allow more space for the dog to position themselves
- Using a custom cut memory foam mattress on the floor instead of a basket
- Chamfering the edges of a foam mattress to reduce the height of the step
- Dycem or non slip tape under the bed to prevent it from moving
- Non-slip mats outside the basket to prevent slips getting in or out

Q6. Can the dog change their position, or move in their bed, without difficulty?

Beds may be too soft, have an uneven and unpredictable surface, be too slippery, or have covers that are loose, which all can lead to trips, slips, twists or falls.

☐ **YES** ☐ **NO - ACTION REQUIRED**

CONSIDER

- Using a foam or memory foam mattress
- Ensuring that the bed is large enough for the dog to move in
- Cutting a foam mattress or having a bed made to fit a suitable space
- Using a duvet cover to enclose loose blankets and tucking it over the edges of the mattress
- Using dycem under blankets to prevent them slipping

Q7. If this is their usual practice, is your dog able to get on and off the sofa?

"With ease" means without hesitation, and no sign of effort. The sofa may be too high, the sofa covering could be too slippery, the floor surfaces in front of the sofa may be too slippery for sufficient grip getting on and off. Adding height into negotiating an obstacle can lead to more serious slips and falls.

☐ **YES** ☐ **NO - ACTION REQUIRED**

CONSIDER

- Restricting access to the sofa and providing a more accessible alternative
- Reducing the height of the seat by removing a base cushion or removing castors
- Providing a ramp or portable dog steps
- Lifting the dog on and off the sofa if safe for yourself to do so
- Ensuring that there is a non slip floor covering in front of the sofa
- Covering slippery cushions with a less slippery secure alternative

Q8. If this is their usual practice, is the dog able to get on and off their owner's bed safely?

The bed may be too high, the mattress too soft, the bedding may impede the mobility of the dog on the bed, or the floor surfaces surrounding the bed may be slippery. 'Safely' means no increased effort, no hesitation, no uncontrolled descent, no jarring movements.
This is not encouraged if the dog is at risk of falling off the bed.

☐ **YES** ☐ **NO - ACTION REQUIRED**

CONSIDER

- Using a lower bed or mattress on the floor
- Use of a dog ramp or portable dog steps up to the bed
- Lifting the dog on and off the bed if safe for the owner to do so

Q9. Is the dog safe from falling off the bed?

☐ YES ☐ NO - ACTION REQUIRED

The dog may sleep near to the edge of the bed and fall off the bed if they roll over. The dog may lose their footing getting on or off the bed. The dog may have fallen off the bed in the past.

CONSIDER

- Positioning the bed against the wall and using a footboard
- Use of a child cot side once the dog is on the bed
- Positioning the mattress on the floor

Q10. Can your dog comfortably stand at their bowl to eat or drink?

☐ YES ☐ NO - ACTION REQUIRED

'Comfortably' means the dog does not have to adopt an adapted posture or a changed behaviour to enable access to the bowl. Discomfort and injury may result if the bowl slips away from the dog along the floor. The dog's feet slip whilst feeding/drinking, or choose to sit or lie down whilst accessing the bowl. This can be a sign of discomfort. The dog may demonstrate difficulty by eating more slowly or more quickly. The dog may show signs of pain or difficulty in reaching the bowl.

CONSIDER

- Raising the food bowl to the height of the dog's shoulder
- Using a shallow bowl
- Dycem or non-slip tape under the food bowl to stop it moving
- Ensuring that the dog stands on carpet or matting to eat
- Placing the water bowl on a towel to mop up water spillages/splashes

Q11. If your dog uses a dog flap, can they enter and exit without difficulty?

Difficulty would be seen through their hesitation and struggle to lift their legs to step over the step, or to crouch to get through the flap. Choosing to access the door flap at a faster or slower pace than normal. They may slip/fall on either side of the flap.

☐ **YES** ☐ **NO - ACTION REQUIRED**

CONSIDER

- Providing a different entrance/exit strategy
- Providing a larger, lower, easier dog flap
- Reducing the height of the step of the flap on either side of the door
- Non-slip mat either side of the flap

Q12. Are external pathways clear, in good repair and non-slip?

Poor repair includes cracked paving stones, uneven surfaces, slippery tiles, mud or gravel or obstacles on the path.

☐ **YES** ☐ **NO - ACTION REQUIRED**

CONSIDER

- Limiting access to hazardous areas
- Repairing broken or uneven paving slabs
- Covering damaged pathways in a suitable non- slip, level surface such as grass or artificial grass

Q13. Does the dog have easy, 'non-hazardous' access to an area of well-maintained grass for play?

'Well-maintained' areas mean trimmed grass or a stable surface which provides a low impact and non-slip surface to walk and balance on. This should be easy to access and without hazards or obstacles.

☐ **YES** ☐ **NO - ACTION REQUIRED**

CONSIDER

- Ensure obstacle free and easily negotiable areas exist within your garden
- Ensure these areas have a predictable surface
- Keep grass cut short

Q14. Can the dog assume a stable posture to urinate and defecate in their chosen toilet zone?

'Stable posture' means they do not demonstrate an adapted posture, a lack of balance, wobbles or trembles on performing the posture, or complete avoidance of a previously displayed posture.

☐ **YES** ☐ **NO - ACTION REQUIRED**

CONSIDER

- Keeping nails and foot fur trimmed
- Ensuring that their 'preferred' toileting area is as level as possible
- Using boots on hind limbs to improve friction with the ground
- Use of a harness or sling to support

Q15. Does your dog display their usual level of confidence and stability when interacting with other dogs within or outside of the home?

'Level of confidence' means they behave with the same engagement and vigour. Signs of reluctance to play, avoidance of the other dog, cautious interaction, or complete lack of interaction would suggest a lack of confidence. 'Stability' means without losing balance, stumbling or falling.

☐ **YES** ☐ **NO - ACTION REQUIRED**

CONSIDER

- Supervising interactions
- Using awareness items to ensure other dog owners are aware of your dog's condition such as labelled bandanas or leads
- Limiting play to trusted friends!
- Alternative activities

Q16. Can the dog get in and out of the car without additional help and with ease?

'Additional help' includes help that the dog has previously not needed. This may be lifting, supporting, or even increased encouragement. 'With ease' means without hesitation, loss of balance, or increased effort or speed.

☐ **YES** ☐ **NO - ACTION REQUIRED**

CONSIDER

- Lifting the dog in and out if safe for the owner to do so
- Using a portable ramp with a non-slip surface, or dog steps
- Parking near a 'natural' step such as a raised pavement or embankment
- Car boots without a 'lip'

Q17. Once in the car does the dog settle down comfortably?

'Comfortably' means without hesitation, without demonstration of discomfort vocally or physically, without reluctance to lie down, without facial expressions of fear such as repeated lip licking, panting, or rigid postures.

☐ **YES** ☐ **NO - ACTION REQUIRED**

CONSIDER

- Padding out the boot or seat to give cushioning underneath and at the side of the dog
- Rear seat hammocks to prevent risk of falling into the footwell
- Regular breaks to get out and walk when on longer journeys
- Ensuring comfortable temperature in the vehicle
- Harnesses are encouraged to prevent risk of injury to the dog and owner if involved in a driving related accident

YOUR ANSWERS.

The number questions you ticked 'YES' to demonstrates how considered and adapted your dog's environment is.

If a question has been ticked with a 'NO' we would encourage you to consider our 'ACTION REQUIRED' advice, as well as seeking more information from our website. The more NO's that are ticked, the greater the likelihood that your dog is at risk of repeated 'micro-trauma' due to slips and falls, which will lead to flares of their condition.

Just as the choice of lifestyle and living conditions of humans can influence the effectiveness of management of our pain and disease progression, so the same applies to canines. Home adaptation is a key area where owners can make a valuable contribution to helping their dog live more comfortably with osteoarthritis.

It is important to stress that when adapting the home environment to meet the needs of your dog, care needs to be taken to ensure that hazards are not created for the human occupants. While rugs on floors are helpful for dogs with mobility problems they are seen as a trip and falls risk for people with mobility issues. Please consider everyone in the home when making adaptations.

We would like to acknowledge Dr Lynette Mackenzie, Discipline of Occupational Therapy, Faculty of Health Sciences, The University of Sydney for her kind permission to reference the 'Home Falls and Accidents Screening Tool' (Home Fast), on which this tool was based.

---

canine arthritis management

The intention of CAM is to provide resources to help change owners, vets and the public's perception of how to diagnose and treat chronic pain in animals, which will then lead to improved lives for the dogs and their owners.

Find out more online...

info@caninearthritis.co.uk
www.caninearthritis.co.uk
#itsmyhometoo

Copyright 2022 Hannah Capon. All rights reserved.